

Bonneville Power Administration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FRIDAY, June 21, 2002

Contact: Bill Murlin / , BPA (503)-230-5131

Kirsten Kler, BPA (503) 230-4411

Wanted: Vandals who damage BPA property Up to \$25,000 reward offered for information

PORTLAND, Ore. - Information that helps catch vandals could be worth up to \$25,000 from the Bonneville Power Administration's Crime Witness Program. The large rewards are a response to significantly increased vandalism on BPA's transmission system.

The agency has upped its reward significantly to encourage people to report suspicious behavior or comments to the Crime Witness Hotline, (800) 437-2744.

"We've had more vandalism on our transmission system this spring than in the past seven years, said Bob Windus, BPA security chief. Since February, at least six incidents have been reported in the Pacific Northwestern states.

The latest incident was very serious, and we hope our higher rewards will produce more information more rapidly, Windus said. Early this month shooters blasted away insulators on a 500-kilovolt-transmission line near Bovill in northern Idaho. The resulting outage darkened another 500-kV line and shut down the powerhouse at Dworshak Dam on the North Fork of the Clearwater River near Orofino, Idaho. The outages lasted over nine hours.

Each time we replace gunfire-damaged insulators, it costs thousands of dollars, Windus said. "But the replacement cost may not be the whole story. Communities, emergency services and businesses are all possibly affected when these shooters senselessly use our transmission lines for target practice.

Windus cautions that, if damaged insulators fail, live transmission lines can fall to the ground. Since those wires are not insulated, electricity can pulse quickly through the ground, injuring or killing animals and people in the vicinity. The lines can also start fires.

Shooters have also damaged insulators and power lines near Eugene, Ore., and Columbia Falls, Mont.

Windus commented that the higher rewards are also related to homeland security concerns, and he encouraged citizens to be vigilant about anything suspicious happening near BPA power lines.

"We are trying to send the strongest possible message that willful attacks upon our transmission system and other facilities are totally unacceptable, Windus stated. We want to show that we are serious about finding and arresting those who damage federal property. We all pay for their thoughtlessness.

Submitted for distribution on 06-21-2002 at 3:55 PM

Bonneville Power Administration, 905 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland, Oregon
97232

Mailing Address: Media Relations - KC7, P.O. Box 3621, Portland, OR 97208-
3621

Phone: (503)230-5131 **FAX:** (503) 230-5884 **Web Site:** <http://www.bpa.gov>